

## TESTIMONY FOR THE SENATE COMMERCE COMMITTEE

Opposition to Senate Bill 98  
Wednesday, May 20, 2015

Good afternoon. My name is Sue Idczak, PhD, RN, CNE and I am the Director of Nursing at Siena Heights University, with me today is Dr. Teresa Wehrwein, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, Associate Dean for Academic and Clinical Affairs and Associate Professor Michigan State University College of Nursing. We are also here on behalf of the Michigan Association of Colleges of Nursing (MACN), an organization that represents 21 of the state's undergraduate nursing programs.

Thank you Chairman Schmidt and members of the commerce committee for allowing us the opportunity to testify and express concerns regarding SB 98, as it pertains to nursing education.

As a nurse for 38 years; 19 in practice; 19 as a nurse educator – I am very qualified to address you on the topic of baccalaureate nursing education.

The state of Michigan is home to 143,599 licensed registered nurses. Last year, Michigan's undergraduate and graduate nursing schools enrolled approximately 11,000 students into our programs, and nearly 9,000 of those students entered into an undergraduate nursing program. Additionally, 3,579 students graduated from our undergraduate and graduate nursing programs in 2014. Last year alone, a total of 4,922 graduates in Michigan took the national board exam to become a licensed registered nurse (NCLEX-RN).

It is important for committee members to understand that it is unclear whether Senate Bill 98 would allow community colleges to offer traditional Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) programs at the end of which the student is awarded a baccalaureate degree and is then eligible to sit for (NCLEX-RN) the licensing examination, or whether this legislation would allow community colleges to offer RN to BSN completion programs open to students who have already completed an associate degree nursing (RN) program and then returning and/or continuing to earn their Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), or would this legislation allow for both types of programs to be offered at community colleges? That is the difference between an additional 28 to 56 NEW nursing programs. Let me explain. RN to BSN completion programs do not increase the registered nursing workforce nor do these programs produce new registered nurses (RN) into the workforce. While it is desirable for Michigan to have more Bachelor prepared registered nurses, most of our states' existing RN to BSN programs at the undergraduate level are significantly under-enrolled and many our colleges have committed to expanding their capacity in the event of additional demand.

If in fact community colleges were to choose to offer a traditional BSN program, this legislation would do nothing to address the bottleneck that exists in nursing education

today. In fact, if passed, it would only exacerbate the problems that face our existing nursing programs by creating unnecessary duplication, worsen existing nursing faculty shortages and the lack of clinical placement availability, and increase educational costs for taxpayers and students, alike.

Proponents of this legislation argue that student access from associate degree nursing programs into bachelor degree nursing programs is non-existent. This is simply untrue. There are currently **66 nursing programs in Michigan** that offer either a bachelor's in science in nursing (BSN) or an associate's degree in nursing (ADN). The majority of programs that offer a BSN degree, also offer an RN to BSN degree completion programs. These programs are offered in classrooms at either the university, community college university centers, or for associate prepared registered nurses on-site in the workplace or on-line through distance learning. Every one of these programs are currently under-enrolled and are under capacity. You could be an associate degree prepared registered nurse (RN) living and working in Pontiac, St. Clair, Jackson, Battle Creek, Petoskey or anywhere else in the state and enroll into one of multiple Michigan universities' online or traditional classroom RN to BSN completion programs.

**I would now like to turn it over to my colleague, Dr. Wehrwein.**

Thank you Senator Schmidt and members of the Commerce committee for giving me the opportunity to speak. My name is Teresa Wehrwein, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, and I am the Associate Dean for Academic and Clinical Affairs and Associate Professor at Michigan State University College of Nursing. I received my nursing education from MSU, and have practices as a nurse and as a nursing educator in Michigan for over 40 years.

I would like to take this time to describe some of our specific concerns with this legislation.

Senate Bill 98 does nothing to address or ease barriers that currently exist to allow all of our states traditional programs to grow and expand, both at community colleges and our private and public colleges and universities. You see, the same barriers exist for undergraduate nursing programs and associate degree nursing programs. According to the Michigan Center for Nursing, community colleges and universities alike, turn down applicants for our traditional nursing programs because of 1) insufficient funding, 2) limited clinical space, and 3) the shortage of qualified nursing faculty. In fact, a recent survey released by the center stated associate degree nursing programs in Michigan turned away 52% of qualified nursing school applicants during 2009-2010 academic years. If community colleges cannot address the current barriers in their existing associate degree nursing programs, wouldn't offering new programs only exacerbate the problem?

SB 98 will duplicate services already in place in Michigan's undergraduate nursing programs, and will increase operating costs of community colleges that offer bachelor degree programs. These additional costs include salaries and benefits for additional

faculty, staff and administration, information and simulation technology, infrastructure, cost of national professional nursing accreditation-which is costly, and other support services. These costs do not include the costs associated with maintaining national professional nursing accreditation. Existing BSN nursing programs do not need this investment, as they all already hold national professional nursing accreditation. As a point of reference, nursing accreditation expense, both initially and for reaccreditation, is costly and requires dedicated time and resources. Accreditation at the BSN level is a mandatory criterion for any graduate nursing program. Universities that offer graduate nursing programs require national nursing accreditation as a university as well as for each level of graduate nursing education. Accreditation certifies that standards of education, institutional resources, and faculty/graduate outcomes are met.

As the current practices of the Michigan Board of Nursing are implemented, any new RN to BSN nursing program created by a community college would not have oversight by the state or by the Michigan Board of Nursing, as the Board of Nursing only approves and evaluates pre-licensure, or programs creating new to practice nurses.

In closing, Michigan's public and private undergraduate nursing programs have an excellent and long history of collaboration with our community colleges and hospitals, and remain committed to educating the state's nursing workforce to meet nursing needs. For example, Siena Heights' RN to BSN degree completion program has a solid collaboration with Monroe County Community College, and Washtenaw Community College; and an affiliation agreement with ProMedica Monroe Hospital. The University of Detroit/Mercy has long standing articulation agreements with multiple community colleges and health care institutions across Michigan. Other examples of articulation agreements include; Ferris State University, which has articulation agreements with 13 community colleges and offers a BSN completion program on-line. The University of Michigan-Flint currently has 691 students enrolled in their RN to BSN completion program. That is a 383% increase in enrollment since 2004. Wayne State, Grand Valley, Western, Oakland, Eastern, Northern, and Saginaw Valley State University offer BSN completion programs, and/or partner with community colleges or health systems to meet the need for BSN prepared nurses. Michigan State University has concurrent enrollment programs with Lansing, Macomb, Muskegon, and Oakland Community College that allows students taking the nursing major courses at the community colleges to apply for admission to and begin taking some of the courses toward their BSN from MSU prior to graduating from their associate degree program.

I want to thank you for allowing us the opportunity to testify today. The Michigan Association of Colleges of Nursing Deans and Directors believe investing in Michigan's existing infrastructure and our nationally accredited four-year nursing programs is the most sensible and cost-effective measure to increase the number of bachelor prepared nurses in the workforce. All of our state's nursing programs are committed to educating highly trained nurses to provide quality and safe patient care. We are hopeful the legislature will continue to support community colleges, independent and private colleges and universities alike, so we can continue to meet the critical need for additional nurses and nurse faculty in Michigan. Thank you for your time. We are happy to answer any questions.